CHRISTIAN DRAMA

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OUR AIM

THIS magazine has a very clear purpose. It is the forum for news and discussion of Christian drama in all its aspects. There is plenty for it to say, for plays of every sort and size on Christian themes are produced annually by the thousand: and a high proportion of the new ideas which are revivifying our theatre have been brought to birth in Christian experiment. *Christian Drama* will make a point of ventilating these ideas, and of discussing the problems which arise from the connection between Christianity and the theatre.

It is designed for a well-defined circle of readers—or rather for two concentric circles. The inner one encloses the members of the Religious Drama Society, the national body founded in 1929 to give help to all practitioners of this art. The Society has before it at this moment a proposal to exchange " religious " for " Christian " in its title. For the members, this magazine is a " news-letter ": delivered from the war-time discomforts of a cyclostyled quarterly, they will find here the news of the Society's doings on a pleasant page.

They will join, too, the much wider circle of those to whom Christian drama is of growing interest and importance, in following the discussion, criticism and advice given on the other pages. The subject has become important from many points of view : to put forward a few will serve to show what an interesting paper this may become.

First, the relationship between Christianity and the stage. What is the scope of Christian drama ? Is it to be confined to what have usually been known as " religious subjects "—the Bible, the lives of saints and heroes of the Faith, the theological implications of life and death ? Or is it to range the whole world of human relationships with the transforming mind of the Christ-centred writer ? Do we not in fact need, more than anything, a drama (on subjects usually deemed " secular ") written from the Christian standpoint ? This idea corresponds to the acknowledged need to bring Christianity into the week-day doings of factory, office, shop and sports-ground.

The Report on " The Conversion of Britain " agrees with many other authorities, that drama is a foremost instrument of evangelism. Here is a means by which laymen can show their Faith to their fellows.

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and show it in convincing and stimulating action. If they do it right, their company of players will itself be a Christian community, and what it bodies forth will beget an urge in audiences to find the same means of grace that formed that company. Both for players and for audiences, then, the drama is a true means of education and conversion. It can teach in the best way—by doing and by becoming—and can hold in itself the life it exists to foster.

But this function of the drama is often misconceived. It is an instrument of evangelism: yes, but only a right one if done *for its own sake.* A play is a work of art, with its own intrinsic life: if it is made in order to teach or to convert, it dies. The Christian play is played to *show forth* Christ in human life: its effect on those who see it must be this effect, not the admonitions of the writer or the players. To let Him speak, that and that alone is the drama's function: whether men listen or not is for their free-will, under their Maker.

This *showing forth* of and for the glory of God has begotten a body of drama that is already of substance and quality.

A forthcoming event is symbolic. The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral are to present in a London theatre one or two special performances of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral,* with the original Becket (Robert Speaight) and the original producer. The object is to raise a fund for the commissioning of new plays for the Canterbury Festival. To support this venture is to nurture the roots of our tree of Christian drama, for we cannot have good shows without good plays. The Festival had already begun on this creative policy before the war, with Eliot as the first playwright to accept the commission. Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers (twice) and Christopher Hassell followed. We certainly need more of such work. In the same field the Religious Drama Society carries out the humbler but necessary task of training playwrights, by constructive criticism and placing of their work. A close collaboration with the S.P.C.K., who both give the Society generous support and publish plays which it recommends, should lead to the establishment, under the Societies' joint imprint, of a drama series of the highest class.

Religion is often labelled a conservative force: in drama it certainly is not so. A large proportion of the new ideas which have influenced our theatre have been born in Festivals and church productions. The Mercury Theatre season of New Plays by Poets is a witness to this, and has shown these ideas put on a London stage to face the critical comparisons of the metropolis. Many Christian plays are old-fashioned—so are many Leftist ones—but the forms of worship and the dramatic nature of the Incarnation have led once again to a freshness of creation which is becoming a major force in the theatre.

This is of vital importance. The art of drama is the most communal of all the arts. It is in the theatre—not only in the professional theatre but still more, perhaps, in the theatre of club, of youth, of school, of village, of church—that art may have its profoundest effect, in that the drama helps men to an understanding of human nature in relation to the Divine. It is our aim to ensure that that understanding is Christian.

Alan Fairclough, who needs no introduction to readers of the "Observer", has written this article specially for "Christian Drama".

DOROTHY SAYERS AND RELIGIOUS DRAMA IN ENGLAND

THE JUST VENGEANCE

Lichfield, June 15, 1946

By Alan Fairclough

A June first night which passed almost without notice was that, in Lichfield Cathedral, of Miss Dorothy L. Sayers' latest adventure in religious drama. It is a pity, for *The Just Vengeance* (the title comes from the *Paradiso*) is a notable and gallant attempt to dramatize that part of the Bible story on which, long ago, Shaw said what many believe to be the last word:—

> "Their (the disciples') champion put up no fight: he went like a lamb to the slaughter, dumb. Such a spectacle is disappointing on the stage, which is the one thing that a drama must not be; and when the disappointment is followed by the scourging and crucifixion it is unbearable: not even the genius of our Poet Laureate, with all the magic of Canterbury Cathedral for scenery, can redeem it except for people who enjoy horror and catastrophe for their own sake and have no intellectual expectation to be disappointed." (From *On the Rocks.*)

It is impossible for a practising Christian not to take sides on the larger issue: Whether it is possible, without offending, but with dramatic and tragic effect, to present on the stage Jesus Christ? The critic is bound in all fairness to say at the beginning where he stands. My belief is, that if you are a practising Christian, drama which does this is offensive and presumptuous to the point of blasphemy: that if on the other hand, you are not of the Faith, the story of the Trial and Crucifixion just doesn't make sense.

Prejudiced thus, it was with some misgivings that I went to Lichfield for this out of the ordinary first night. The setting in its way was as perfect as Canterbury—perhaps too perfect. Lichfield, one of our smallest Cathedrals, is also one of the most beautifully proportioned: and in the failing light of evening the elevated stage set against the great West window, with spotlights focussed from the triforium, acquired from its surroundings some of the dignity and the magic of age. In that June dusk one pictured an earlier Lichfield, when the great Craft Guilds of Staffordshire retained their old authority, held their services and in Town and Minster Close performed their Mysteries. And we knew Miss Sayers for a daring and highly competent adaptor of the Christian legend: and, what is more, one familiar with the most relevant of the ancient critics. Did she not adopt Aristotle as the Patron Saint of detective novelists?

Then the Recording Angel appeared and surmise was lost in fruition. The action of the piece—Miss Sayers calls it " a modern Miracle-play " —takes place in the conscience of an airman in the moment of his death after being shot down. Against a chorus's insistent repetition of the Apostles' Creed—as hideous in its context as the surgeon's twisted creed in *The Dog Beneath the Skin*—the airman details his own belief:—

" I believe in man and in the hope of the future,
The steady growth of knowledge and power over things,
The equality of all labouring for the community,
And a just world where everyone will be happy."

But he hears George Fox, like Cassandra, crying Doom on the bloody city, he meets the Labourer, the Informer, the Potter, the Harlot and the Widow, in their peculiar miseries. The inequalities, the injustices of suffering and poverty press on him. At first he blames the Past:—

" It was not my fault but the fault of the old people . . ."

but he cannot face the haunting eyes of this chorus of unfortunates:—

" Forgive me, I was wrong: we are victims together:
Or guilty together; . . .
[But] I want to know what it is all about,
And whether the thing makes sense. I have lived; I have died;
I have a right to know."

Thereupon the Recorder to the Chorus:—

" Go play your chosen parts in that great play
Wherein the Princes of this world are judged
By Him they judge, and you who are the jury
Stand with the prisoner in the dock and hear
Your sentence on yourselves; and we will show you
The Image of Man who was made in the Image of God;
And God in the Image of Man: and the Image of Justice."

The upper stage opens, revealing Eve and Mary, who are catechised by the airman. Adam invents an axe . . .

" Which will go far to circumvent the curse
And usher in the new progressive age."

In earnest of which, Cain, with the new engine, cleaves Abel to the heart.

So far it has been plain sailing. Miss Sayers has adroitly blended references to the Cathedral's 750th anniversary and the contemporary world crisis with a highly imaginative retelling of the first chapters of Genesis. The desultory conversation between the anachronistic collection of recognizably historical characters has not been ill-managed. But so far " God has not said a word ", and at this mid-point of the Miracle we are beginning to wonder exactly how Miss Sayers will produce her *Deus ex machina*. When she does come to this crux she manages it extremely well and the ordering of speech and situation is one of the rewarding things in the drama. This is the way of it:—

At the slaying of Abel, fraught with such tragedy for human-kind, the primary theme is reiterated by the Friend, Fox: "Vengeance is mine, saith God, I will repay." In a rejoinder as remarkable for its echoes as for its wisdom, Eve—shown throughout to be much wiser than her sottish husband—points out that no man in his senses would ask for Justice. (We remember Hamlet's, "Who should 'scape whipping?") The justice meted out by man is tempered, if not by mercy, by policy, but the Justice of God, the vengeance of the innocent —what dread thing that must be.

"When you call for Justice
You would make God your bailiff, to collect
Your legal dues; but not your almoner,
Still less your judge. Alas! You cannot bend
God to your service; (*echoes of St. Joan*) yet he may hear prayers.
Sometimes his vengeance is a granted prayer,
When a corrupt heart gains its whole desire
And finds itself in Hell. Children take heed,
And do not pray for justice: you might get it.

And brushing aside a mouthed stupidity of Adam's, Eve looks forward to:—

"... something else—
A kind of mercy that is not unjust, ...
God's word was that we should find a man,
The image of his argument bodily,
Whose heel of flesh should bruise the serpent's brain
Visibly. Will you not pray God send that sight?
For our sad eyes see nothing now but death."

"Roll back our sins," cries Adam, kindling, as who would not, with some of this visionary fire: and the curtains of the upper stage divide to reveal Heaven's Gates resplendent against the West window, and these in their turn opening, disclose, crowned in all the braided glory of Byzantine apparel, the Persona Dei, flanked by Gabriel and another angel.

Now this, one may well think, is very effective; it has been cleverly thought out. It is, in consequence, all the more disappointing when, in his first speech, the Persona Dei conclusively turns School Divine.

For the rest the piece follows the Gospel story as far as is possible with this kind of miracle-cum-pageant-cum-play, where the generations kiss and commingle. Caiaphas, at the trial, succinctly states his case:—

"Our holy court
Is not concerned with what the prisoner did
Whether good or bad, but only with his claim.
Now, by the living god, answer to me—
Are you the Christ, the son of God?"

"I am", comes the response: and that is that: ... "Their champion ... went like a lamb to the slaughter, dumb ..."

Pilate, finding in him no fault, delivers him for chastisement into the hands of the priests, but, as in St. Joan, the church leaves the nails and the stake to the secular arm. Still shunning action, Pilate passes

the prisoner to an emasculate Herod, with the worn words of the practised Civil Servant: " Passed to you please for information and action," whence to be bandied back on territorial grounds. Then comes the momentous choice of Barabbas (Cain) and the crucifixion: we are spared the nails. Then, word for word, whispers through the cathedral the *Quem quaeritis*, with that wonderful response which first pierced the hearts of men centuries ago. After a triumphant oration before the cross of glory Jesus ascends to heaven to assume the raiment of the risen Christ.

Miss Sayers' religious dramas have all been of some length and elaboration: and her latest, though written for and therefore conditioned by, a special occasion, may be considered a further exploration of those fields first entered in *He That Should Come*; *The Zeal of Thy House*; and *The Man Born to be King*. It is not inapposite, then, to recall what Miss Sayers felt and said in earlier days:—

From the preface to *He That Should Come*:—

" I feel sure that it is in the interests of a true reverence towards the incarnate Godhead to show that His manhood was a real manhood subject to the common realities of daily life . . ."

And from *The Man Born to be King*:—

" Beside it (the Jesus story) the doom of Oedipus is trifling . . . Technically the swiftest way to produce the desirable sense of shock is the use in drama of modern speech and a determined historical realism about the characters."

Here then we have the *motifs*: Christ to be *homo inter homines*, the sense of the momentous, the desirable sense of shock most swiftly produced (notice she does not say *best* produced) by using the modern idiom. As a principle the use of obtrusively modern idiomatic speech seems to have been abandoned in *The Just Vengeance*: to be replaced, unfortunately, by the echoed cadences of Mr. Eliot. Until the appearance of the Persona Dei, one might think, there is no startling incongruity between the verse and the occasion: but on the instant the curtains divide to discover the Son of God the normal values of speech and action are suspended. " On the stage the dumb figure cannot be got rid of: it is to him that we look for a speech that will take us up to heaven. . . ." For momentous happenings beside which " the doom of Oedipus is trifling " we expect momentous words. This is what we hear:—

> " I, the Image of the Unimaginable,
> In the place where the Image and the Unimaged are One,
> The Act of the Will, the word of the Thought, the Son
> In whom the father's selfhood is known to Himself,
> I being God and with God from the Beginning
> Speak to Man in the Place of the Images."

For one critic at least, this was enough. This may be sound theology but—quite apart from the disturbing philosophical considerations raised by the use of the word " Image "—this just is not *vox dei*. What is worse it is not even *vox populi*.

This, it may be asserted, is an unfair quotation: and, indeed, there are lines spoken by the Saviour *qui se chantent dans le coeur* and are long remembered. As in the final speech from the Cross:—

> " Come, receive again
> All your desires, but better than your dreams,
> All your lost loves, but lovelier than you knew, . . .
> Instead of your justice, you shall have charity;
> Instead of your happiness, you shall have joy;
> Instead of your peace the emulous exchange
> Of love; and I will give you the morning star."

Decies repetita placebit. The last line is apocalyptical, but what matter? Newman, who would have abhorred the first, could not but have approved of these second lines.

But nowhere at the great occasions is there language fitting: never for the unique attitudes the unique words: not at all the *tanto oltraggio*, the mighty outrage on human experience made by the known words and deeds of this Man " surer of eternity than time ".

How, indeed, could they be conveyed? The mediaeval moralities themselves scarcely caught their gleam. They wisely avoided the main issue and for their most popular performances exploited the crude humour of the tale of Noah's wife, the workmen at the Cross and the soldiers at the Tomb.

There are two main criticisms one may level against *The Just Vengeance*. First it does not face up to the Trial. The prosecutors are grouped together haphazardly on the stage: they address each other with the casual informality of " socialites " for whom this is a boring interlude between champagne and coffee. Not that it may not have been so in reality. Very likely it was. But if, on the stage, in the case of the State versus Jesus Christ, alleged Son of God, you muzzle the defence at the same time as you belittle the prosecution, you are left with a negation—a Trial without conflict and a Play without meaning.

The Truth *about* the Trial may very well be this, that a bench of amiable clubmen casually had crucified a taciturn prisoner who offered no defence. But that is not—what, for the Playgoer as for the Christian, is the only Truth that matters—the Truth *behind the Trial*.

Masefield, in *The Trial of Jesus*, presents the Biblical dumb prophet in the dock. But the balance is redressed by the presentation of the Prosecutors as vividly real, intensely earnest men, who urge Jesus to reply, as Cauchon conjured Saint Joan. As a result, although there is the danger (foreseen by Shaw) that the Prosecutors may appear the heroes, the Trial and the issues at stake are on the mammoth scale. With so much symbolism that is valuable in her piece, Miss Sayers rends its whole fabric in her " playing-down " of the Trial.

The other criticism, of course, is of the representation of Jesus and the Passion. Yeats knew better, and in the " Resurrection " kept his Christ off-stage. *Homo inter homines*—it is a taking tag—but at the last

reckoning Christ just is not another man among men. By mien, regard and gesture, the actor must suggest a man who was, in a very real sense the " cynosure of all eyes "; whose unseen presence is a felt force, whose bodily presence was a beatitude. As props the actor has only the tradition of the tall figure, slightly bowed, olive-skinned, oval-faced, bearded: above all, with radiant compelling eyes.

All these, in some measure, Mr. Raf de la Torre had, and to them, at moments, he added a voice of the utmost sweetness and light, a natural grace of movement and gesture. But they were not enough: and the fault lay mainly in his fellow-actors. They are the onlookers' eyes and ears. In proportion as they react to this presence, so will the onlooker react. That, you will remember, is how Yeats makes his absent Christ dominate the stage, as Caesar dead dominates Julius Caesar. Half-hints, inward questionings, lead up to the overwhelming, stunned response to the actual (yet shadowy) presence at the end of the play.

But even then it is doubtful whether any actor can live up to the description of Christ and his effect on men. A step downwards, and yes, it will work. Browning's " Strafford "—with the same voice and eyes (" those eyes of his ")—does not fail expectation because we do not expect too much. We look for magnetism and any competent actor will ooze it; for histrionics and oratory and these are supplied. But with Christ we expect what we have never known and, of course, we are not filled. Christ can put on man: man cannot put on Christ.

Thus, the crucifixion, when it comes, is only a disgusting spectacle. Unseen, off stage, with the heard jeers of the crowd—as in Masefield's play—it may be something more. It is surely significant that in *The Just Vengeance* the most moving moment comes when, out of sight, Christ, bearing the Cross, limps in sandalled feet down the aisle, down the nave. There was a world of poignancy in that halting progress, and the dragged feet scraped the heart.

It may be objected that the kind of Christ-play desiderated here is the unattainable. But those who remember a little poem-play by Humbert Wolfe written about eleven years ago know that these problems have been faced and surmounted once at least. In *X at Oberammergau* a stranger wanders into the village, and, because there is something about him, he is asked to play Christ in the Passion Play; the other actor having fallen ill. It soon becomes clear that this stranger is no ordinary man. His presence splits the cast into dissenting parties —on the one hand that led by John and the two Marys, and on the other the party of Judas under the influence of Hans Kanalgeruch, the Nazi Commissioner responsible for the play.

An almost literal following of the Gospel story leads up to the climax of this conflict between Christianity and paganism—the crucifixion—off-stage, of the Christ. The actor plays Christ at two removes, almost: and the evasive nominations—Anima Christi, Persona Dei—of Miss Sayers and Charles Williams are unnecessary.

This, with a vengeance, is to do what Miss Sayers assayed—to set Christ's redemptive act against the background of contemporary crisis. But in how subtler a fashion. This Christ is not seen: his voice heard once only when Peter denies him:—

" ' Blasphemy,' shouted Peter. ' You speak as though
He were that other. No, leave my hands. I go
To speak with the rest.' ' Yes, Peter, keep your tryst,'
As the door opened, spoke the voice of Christ."

For the rest, it is this Stranger's influence on his fellow actors:—

" ' His voice,' John interrupted, ' like a bell
Rang in our ears.' "

He is seen talking to Jews and loose women. At rehearsals, says Pilate:—

" All my mind was suddenly filled with doubt
As the centurions brought the prisoner out.
He did not ask nor plead, but the great quiet
He brought with him flew upward through the riot. . . ."

Kanalgeruch, gross, pagan, bears equal, though unwitting witness:

" ' Her father was a Jew,'
I said. ' You know the German law for them.'
' The same,' he answered, ' as in Jerusalem. . . .'
' You are a Jew! ' He answered, ' You have said it.' "

And so he goes to the Cross in the old way: and, again, the manner of his dying is learnt at second-hand.

This has been too long a digression, but it is important as showing these truths—that the only accepted Christ is the private Christ of the heart; that a voice on the stage defiles that image; that, in the Christ play, the sense of the momentous is essential, and there should be no single moment when the interest lapses or that sense fades. For this reason the greatest Christ plays have been comparatively short, intense and highly poetical. To measure Miss Sayers against these is hardly charitable.

PRIZE COMPETITION

THE Religious Drama Society offers a prize of two guineas for an acceptable design for a motif to be used on all R.D.S. publications, including Page 1 of *Christian Drama*. The design should be suitable for reproduction in varying sizes, and for printing in either two colour or black and white. Designs should reach this office not later than January 11, 1947, accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope for return of the unsuccessful entries.

COMMON GROUND

Three Reports on the Sheffield Religious Drama School

From Pamela Keily

"Write as the organizer" an account of the Sheffield Religious Drama School. . . . It was the culmination of almost a year of preparation, and something amounting to panic assailed one as July 27th drew near. How would the eminent members of the staff re-act? Would the time-table reveal serious hitches? Would the food be adequate?

Fourteen people on a train from London at 1.50. The organizer to meet it. Increasing tendency to pray feverishly, as at approach of flying-bomb. Train in. Passengers out. Platform emptied. One person, exactly, was discovered!

Actually, the second section of the train brought quite a large group which included Mr. Martin Browne and Miss Woodcock. Contact established, we set out for the Training College—feeling astonishingly as if we'd known each other for years, and as if this might be going to be rather a nice school.

It was. For as the students began to pour in from far and wide, they seemed to bring with them a quite indescribable fellowship and spirit of exhilaration. They were people pursuing a similar end—and pursuing that end with the same zest, in the same Faith.

There was a happiness from the start, and a very right impetus given to proceedings by the Archdeacon of Sheffield's Sunday morning address. As the week unfolded, it was not only the organizer who marvelled. But perhaps it was only she who had the chance of moving behind the scenes as well as among the students. It was she who could overhear the comments in the resident staff's sitting-room, and observe from class to class a little of how things were moving. One frequently longs for Religious Drama to escape from the deliberate effort to "do good". This staff never thought along those lines at all. They simply did the job by virtue of what they were. And because of what they were, the students' appreciation knew no limits. Yet the organizer realized also that appreciation of having such responsive students was not lacking among the staff.

The resident staff dealt chiefly with the practical side of play production, while the visiting lecturers emphasized the theological aspects of the Drama. Here there appeared a grave omission in the plans. For had there been a stenographer taking down every word, a really stimulating journal could have been produced by the end of the week. As it was, in spite of an attempt to take notes, the organizer invariably got too interested to do more than listen.

Looking back, one realizes that each morning brought surprisingly different lectures on the one subject of Religious Drama. Most encouraging of all as a sign of vitality in the school, was the unhesitating way in which discussion broke out as soon as the lecturer stopped.

No one could deny that the week was hard work for both students and staff. Nevertheless, such a concentrated time-table was profitable and no one seemed to regret the consequent fatigue. Undoubtedly powers of endurance were fortified on the material level by the Training College's excellent catering.

When, finally, Friday night came, the results of the week's rehearsals were shown. Thought incomplete, the final demonstration showed a remarkable amount of practical work done in so short a time. It was right that Mr. Martin Browne should have pointed out the necessarily unfinished quality of the demonstration, and emphasized that the aim was to learn the practical ways of attaining an artistic standard worthy of Religious Drama. In summing up the week, he pointed out that the value of the conference would be in whether or not the students went away and put into practice what they had learnt.

Still more true were the words in which he expressed realization of the prayers and support of many people not actually present. Both he and the organizer were deeply touched by the felicitous way in which the school demonstrated its appreciation that last night. For the students recognized the fact of which Mr. Browne wrote afterwards: "The whole thing, with all our shortcomings fully allowed for, had an over-riding power working in it."

From Jessie Powell

"SHEFFIELD" for many of us no longer means "a name on our knife and fork". Our dramatic activities will take on a new system of dating—"Before Sheffield" or "After Sheffield".

For it was a truly great experience. We felt as though we were living more intensely during those six days than we had lived for many years.

There is no one factor which "made" the week; rather it was the perfect balance achieved by many working in inspired co-operation. The preliminary work put in by Pamela Keily and all the staff made it possible in the first place—we all knew that the school did not *start* on 27th July! We may not have said an awful lot about that to the people who had slaved for so long, but we knew and valued their contribution all the time.

It is difficult to speak appreciatively enough of the work of the five resident tutors without sounding either fulsome or patronizing and in any case insufferable. We felt that we were learning through the pores of our skin as well as through our minds, there were such riches. Yet even more impressive was the courtesy of presentation, as typified in this scrap of dialogue, after we had been invited by him to "produce with me":—

Obscure student: "Couldn't such-and-such a line be spoken in this direction, instead of that?"

M. B.: "Yes. . . . Yes, it could. Yes, that's very good. Thank you." *Thank you*—from a somebody to a nobody! But then, that's the hallmark of a somebody—and, we hope, that's how nobodies become a little less "no".

The balance between intake and output had been cleverly planned. In the lectures and talks we took in to the very limit of our grey matter, but before indigestion-point was reached we had opportunity for self-expression fuller than we had dreamed. Sometimes we astonished ourselves by doing things we had no idea we could do, thanks entirely to one or another of the tutors.

With Doreen Woodcock we had the joy of what was for many of us a first experience of mime. We had further opportunity to use what we learned in the Music with Drama Group too, with Diana Carroll and Jennifer Greenwood. It was shaming to think how long some of us have possessed the Oxford Book of Carols, yet to what little use we have put it. But if the little use to which we have put a book was shaming, what of the abysmal depths to which we sank when our own teeth and tongues let us down over " Romany-yeomanry " ? Rodney Bennett's chuckle will accompany our efforts until the next school, and bathrooms all over the country echo with our perseverance.

The visiting lecturers helped, not only to instruct, but to clarify our minds about our common heritage. It was not so much that denominational differences seemed small by comparison; we reached a heightened awareness of each others' point of view. Free Churchmen must have gained an increased appreciation of the Rituals of the Church in relation to drama.

It was this that made all our contacts so rich and valuable. Before the school, it had been amusing to watch our friends' stunned reaction to our information about where we were going. To the uninitiated, a School of Religious Drama sounds worthy, but also dull and stodgy. But Sheffield was not " a home for lost causes ". Which was more surprising: the youthfulness of so many of the students or the vitality of the not-so-young ? The R.D.S. staff (T. G. Bartholomew and Carina Robins) deserve special bouquets for the way in which they coped with the concentrated enthusiasm.

No matter in what Group we demonstrated on the Friday, every Group expressed something of what each of us was feeling. We saw not only " yonder shining light ", but the wicket gate through which we must go to reach it. We all knelt in spirit at the Manger-Throne; we were all told " He is yours: take Him ". Whatever gifts of hand or mind or eye we may possess, they were all dedicated at the altar, and now we go forth to work for a New Order—after Sheffield.

From the Rev. W. J. Fletcher Campbell

" So will you please write your impressions of the Drama School at Sheffield from the point of view of an ordinary member of the Church of England. . . ."

Thus ran the summons from Headquarters. I felt at once that it was an undertaking that would daunt the bravest, and yet I said I would do it, because Sheffield had meant such a lot to so many people that I thought it would be one way of showing for myself and many others an appreciation of all that was done there.

So, then, let us get into reminiscent mood. What do we see? A certain car making its way to Sheffield, carrying its occupants to their first school of religious drama; taking them to an unknown city and on an unknown enterprise for the last week of their holiday, there to undergo what seemed to be a very intensive period of training. The thoughts of the occupants were full of doubts. Would it be rather a " sticky " week? Would there be somewhat of an intense atmosphere? Could we really call it a holiday? Could we enjoy it? Yes, those were the thoughts, rather impertinent thoughts, which filled our minds as we approached that grim and grimy city of Sheffield.

The joy of a welcome cup of tea was very soon dispelled however by our first activity: an awful knee-knocking wait behind the scenes, before going on the stage to say our party piece to five unknown members of the staff. What blessed relief when it was all over and we could go and watch the others!

Space forbids speaking of the arrangements in detail, the Group classes, the informal talks at meals with the experts, the discussions of common problems at all hours of the night. The memory of them still holds, but each one goes to make up a whole, and it is of the whole that I would now speak.

We came with misgivings. How did we leave? With real sorrow that the week was over. It was a week that just could not have been missed, even had it been our only week's holiday. Secondly, had there been any doubts as to the tremendous opportunities offered by religious drama in the work of evangelization, they were dispelled. Here was something new-born, vital; something being undertaken by people brimming over with faith and enterprise. We found, too, a wonderful fellowship, born of a common seeking after a road, born too of a common determination to find that road, for along it God was calling everyone of us. It mattered not at all whether one was " expert " or " rabbit ". All were there to give of their experience, and to take from the common treasury thus formed.

The courtesy shown by those on the staff was amazing. How near distraction they must at times have been driven by our stupidity and by our wooden-headedness! And yet all the time they treated us with patience, making us feel that what we thought really mattered. In all they did they radiated a joyous enthusiasm which I feel sure set the seal on the whole school.

On the last evening Mr. Martin Browne warned the audience that what they were to see was just a series of group classes, not to be thought of as a performance. We thought back to plays we had presented in public, and we blushed for our efforts and were ashamed. We wondered if we should ever dare to present religious drama again. But that doubt soon went. Here was something which simply had to spread. Here, we felt, was at last common ground upon which all Christian denominations could meet. Here were a body of Christians, who had known true Christian fellowship in worship and service for a week, going on their way with a mission; namely, to go out and make people realize what a wonderful opportunity of expressing their faith and their belief was held out to them in religious drama. Though

perhaps many went away (ourselves included) chastened by the realization of how little we knew, yet we all went away encouraged. No longer did we see ourselves working away against apparently hopeless difficulties in our own little corner of the globe, but we saw ourselves as partners in a team of fellow-workers, with the same problems, the same enthusiasm, the same opportunities.

Does all this seem too glowing an account? If it does I can assure all who read it that it expresses the true feelings of a very ordinary member of the Church of England who was privileged to spend a memorable week at Sheffield.

But, above all, perhaps we came away feeling that religious drama was the power that it undoubtedly is, because it has its foundations upon a rock, and that Rock is Christ. Here is no mere performing of another play with a particular message, but rather a real showing forth of that which gives us power to live, that which is the very essence of our lives. Those taking part in religious drama are doing it because they know they have a priceless possession in their Christian faith, and here is the means of sharing it with others.

Such are the impressions left in my mind by Sheffield. Our thanks go out to those who made the school possible. But the best way we can show our thanks is by doing all we can to carry the torch-light of religious drama into our own parishes, congregations, clubs or organizations in that spirit of worship and service which was shown so clearly to be the inspiration of this movement of Religious Drama.

NEWS OF THE OTHERS

STAR TURNS

On Tour.

The Rev. Rex Parkin is Vicar of King's Langley, Herts. He also —how nobody knows—has time to be producer, coach, advance booking-clerk and general manager of a highly-skilled company of young actors in his Parish. Last spring this company toured *Murder in the Cathedral* round St. Albans Diocese. They made a profit of £50 by this undertaking, and have presented the entire sum to R.D.S.

As they themselves have made no reference to this remarkable achievement, except in a parenthesis in a letter on other matters, we can't tell you how they did it. But the Society is extremely grateful for their generosity. Stop Press reports of this group tell of a production of Obey's *Noah* well advanced.

Living Newspaper.

From the Iona Youth Trust comes the letter quoted below. We have selected this as a Star Turn item, because it is, so far as we know, an entirely new idea.

> " *Living Newspaper.* This started with a group discussing various aspects of current affairs, and turned rather into a debate with the class split in two about various issues . . . We have, however, achieved the first copy of the Living Newspaper.

" We started this off by a bill poster sticking up ' Broadsheet No. 1 ' on a hoarding and opening the play with a few lines of doggerel verse covering the latest developments. We turned the page and found two showmen rather like circus barkers, demonstrating the atom bomb in slightly sinister and slightly humorous verse. We went on with the next page on Eastern questions, and we were lucky enough to have a Malayan in the group complete with traditional costume. Then we broke off. A man interrupted and said it's absurd to present the Living Newspaper on subjects of which we are largely ignorant. He made the cast look at the audience and told them that here in the audience is the stuff of the Living Newspaper. What are the things which will be of common interest to the audience and to the actors, ' Act about these things.' So they begin to get down to the real subject of the Living Newspaper, that is, their own jobs. The monotony of factory work illustrated by a group on an imaginary belt, by hearing the thoughts going through their minds : the monotony of office work illustrated by dialogue with the Interrupter and a long line of typists. . . . It is, in fact, an illustrated debate. For instance, after an interview with an Industrialist, the Interrupter says, in a series of scenes, how some people can be *forced* on to the factory belt. These scenes included demobbed soldiers and boys just leaving school. The Little Man (a depressed version of Strube's Little Man) retaliates by saying that the Interrupter's point about the monotony of work is completely out of focus—that you have time to think on a factory belt or a typewriter, but when you are, say, a schoolmaster, *that's* the really wearing monotony. He illustrates his points. The whole cast take up the threads there and try to find the solution—which is, of course, impossible—but the question arises about how the Christian principles are involved and how they can be applied. Two girls in the cast are then heard to be discussing loudly between themselves, interrupting the play. They are brought forward so that all the audience can hear what they are saying (since they insist on talking at the top of their voices anyhow), and they start a discussion in which the audience join. Whether the audience join in vigorously or not is, I suppose, questionable, but in demonstrations we have given so far they have risen to it very well indeed.

" The point that I thought might interest people is about the way some of the scenes were created. Many of them were improvized by three or four of the cast and what they said on the spur of the moment was taken down in shorthand. This scene, created in a matter of moments, was then handed to me. I cut it (there was always too much of it), and put it in its right place within the the framework of the Living Newspaper.

" For instance, a man, a woman and a boy were told, ' We want a scene now where the boy has left school. He's got all sorts of ideas of what he wants to do, is in that curious exciting state of leaving one world and going into an entirely different kind of life. He's full of all the romance of adolescence, talking about

what he is going to do. His father clamps down on him like a vice, is determined that the son should do exactly what *he* had to do and thinks the boy's ideas are just high-falutin' nonsense. The mother drifts rather vaguely, usually saying, 'Ask your father.' They then go on the stage without any pause whatsoever and act the scene. This is a fairly simple scene that I have described. Sometimes they did much more complicated ones including seven or eight characters. Sometimes it was a solo scene when it got to the point, for instance, of the Little Man's saying that school mastering was a great deal more monotonous. We ask the schoolmaster in the group to improvize a speech in which he put forward his own point of view. He was rather an embittered schoolmaster and the result was very interesting. We then brought his speech to life by dramatizing it and using voices off-stage and some of the more exciting theatrical tricks to make it more the stuff of the theatre."

Battle School.

This letter, received from the Torchbearer Group, St. Albans, seems to us to have much more than local interest:—

"A few lines regarding an experiment which has been carried on for several years now by the small Group under my direction, attached to the St. Albans Torchbearer Youth Group. Twelve in all, including musicians (vocalists, pianist and violinist), travel to various towns and also visit prisons with a small repertoire of plays written to present Christian truths to people who would not ordinarily be attending religious gatherings. The plays are written by myself, adapted to the working-class audiences which we gather. The Torchbearer Group is attached to the Salvation Army Corps in St. Albans and we visit various Salvation Army centres for the most part, though some Church work has been done. Our programme usually comprises a Saturday night full-length play of the narrative type, for which we get good audiences. On Sunday afternoon we present another, either setting forth a modern problem or a Scripture play, and at night we use the very brief play to 'illustrate' the sermon in an evangelical service.

"The work is kept on popular lines. We accept the severest limitations, having to play in all kinds of buildings, ranging from theatres taken for the occasion to huts and shacks devoid of almost everything but dust. . . . The Group consists of young people who had some little school training and who have worked very hard to master the technique in a very modest way.

"We do not claim any artistic excellence, but have had most interesting results. Quite a number of people who were wasting their lives are now linked up into Christian service following our visits. Our audiences vary from upwards of 1,500 in large buildings, to a hundred or so in small places. On Sunday night, in the Salvation Army way, we call for immediate decision for Christ, following the visual presentation of the message, and have seen some very moving results. . . .

"In the prisons where we have had a number of visits, audiences of men have packed their recreation rooms and chapels and watched and listened with the deepest attention. I think perhaps our greatest power is the sincerity of the young people who do really give themselves to the work."

All the Rest.

"Poor Players?" Nonsense! They'll try anything: they cover the country: their vitality is one of the most hopeful portents in the field of Christian endeavour. Why hopeful? Because you cannot act in a religious play without laying yourself open to a very grave risk. And people should be warned of this. You may begin just because you like acting, but there is no guarantee (and the danger is a real one) that you will not be involved, if you once begin, in a positive, sometimes even a shocking, religious experience. What follows is the case-history of people who've accepted that risk.

Soho. "*Can these bones?* . . ."
From St. Anne's House, Soho, comes news of a group named *The Bones of Hazlitt*. So far they have produced no play, but have a programme of lectures and rehearsed readings.

Correspondent, R. M. GEE.

Windsor. Windsor Parish Players; one play already produced—Gheon's *Way of the Cross*, and planned for Epiphany, Philip Lamb's *Sons of Adam*. During Lent, a revival of *The Way of the Cross*.

Correspondent, A. P. TREASURE.

Haltwhistle. "Our Passion Play was a great success. We played it before about 600 people and 100 were turned away on Good Friday night."

Correspondent, J. E. JAMESON.

Truro. During Passion Week, St. Paul's Players produced M. Cropper's *Christ Crucified*. "At Christmas we hope to present *Eager Heart*."

Correspondent, W. R. NEWTON.

Stratford-on-Avon. The Torch Players performed *Everyman* in their Parish Church—first play to have been performed there since medieval times. Society truly interdenominational—Anglican, Congregationalist and Roman Catholic. Present policy to produce both religious and "straight" plays; next scheduled is André Obey's *Noah*.

Correspondent, A. BATES.

Ewell, Surrey. Impressive record, since 1941, of eighteen plays and play-readings. This Christmas, Ewell is producing *Outcasts* by Creagh Henry.

Correspondent, V. M. MATTHEWS.

Belle Isle, Leeds. In five productions since 1943, St. John and St. Barnabas House show a steady progress from Nativity Tableaux by children to an Easter play by youth group seniors and adults. This year a Sunday evening Drama Club is working on *The Bishop's Candlesticks*. We are to have a change at Christmas with a short pantomime and no serious drama. We hope to produce something good next Easter.

Correspondent, R. G. STANTON.

[*This idea of an occasional break from Religious Drama is all to the good. It gives a chance to discover talent that wouldn't otherwise come forward, and is also essential in developing technical skill in the actors.*]

North Shields. Holy Trinity Players " . . . read and discussed Cropper's *Christ Crucified* . . . represented Gheon's *Way of the Cross* last Passion-tide in the church here."

Correspondent, B. H. RUSHTEN.

Morpeth. Cresswell Parish Players have presented Irene Caudwell's *By Thy Cross and Passion* (Lent, 1945) and Chas. B. Hemmings' *The Silver Bag* (Jan., 1946).

Correspondent, T. G. RIDLEY.

Cambridge. Cambridge Wesley Players have read Dorothy Sayers' *The Man born to be King* and a number of other plays. Produced Sayers' *Kings in Judaea*, Rodney Bennett's *The Real St. George* and Doris Gill's *The Cup*. In Sunday School the children write their own plays on Biblical themes.

Correspondent, R. SPIVEY.

Worcester. The Sansome Walk Baptist Players, since joining R.D.S. in 1945, have produced (Dec., 1945) F. Collins' *The Centurion*, F. C. Raynor's *The Damascus Road*; in April, 1946, *The Prisoner of Hope*; this winter are working on Henzie Raeburn's *The Beginning of the Way*, together with parts of *Amor Christi*, together with Seaward Beddow's *Prodigal Son*. " . . . thrilling to be able to have copies coming down, but what a scarcity of full plays for parties of, say, nine males, seven females. Can you help ? "

Correspondent, W. R. DAVIES.

[*Authors, please note.*]

Cirencester. Watermoor Players joined R.D.S. in December, 1945. In February, 1946, they acted *The House on the Wall*, by Michael Stancliffe,* also F. H. Grisewood's *Celestial Gardener*. Scheduled for autumn, production of M. Cropper's *Behold I send You Forth.*

Correspondent, S. PERRY.

Southampton. The Wayfarers (forty-six members) have been very successful in the recent Theatre Guild Drama Festival. " L.A.G. Strong gave both (plays) very high praise, and I am very glad of this because it means that the only society in the town that devotes itself primarily to Religious Drama has proved itself one of the soundest dramatically in competition with the other leading societies."

Correspondents, C. DEVERILL
and D. B. GREAVES.

[*Of course, it is vital to the standards and value of Religious Drama that, eventually, the best acting in any community should be that of the Religious Drama Group. Fine that Southampton has already succeeded.*]

Leicester. A group of players in Leicester produced F. C. Raynor's *Resurrection*. " Audiences good and very appreciative."

Correspondent, K. ROWLES.

Boston. Zion Methodist Church writes of their performance of Lambs' *Go Down, Moses*: " Whew ! what an effort, but done it was and with considerable success. We played four nights to approximately six hundred people."

Correspondent, G. DURRANT.

* To be published shortly by S.P.C.K.

Poplar. All Saints' Church. Here a Passion play constructed out of the old passion plays of the York, Chester and Coventry cycles was performed. Carina Robins, who saw this play, writes: "The keynote of this production was sincerity. . . . One can imagine the amount of effort in work and prayer which went to the creating of this play."

Birmingham. Coventry Road Methodist Church. The Drama Section entered for the Religious Drama Festival arranged by the Birmingham Youth and Sunday School Union last year, with Vera Arlett's *The Gardener*, and after winning the preliminary tests, performed at the Birmingham and Midland Institute in the Final where they secured second place.

Correspondent, G. M. Brain.

Redcar. Christ Church, Coatham, Guild of Players joined R.D.S. in June, 1939. They have a very long list of plays, seventeen in all, to their credit; plays which they have presented either in their church or in the Church Day School.

Blackburn. The Blackburn Anglican Religious Drama Society (BARDS) write: "We read the play *The Stars Bow Down*, by Gordon Daviot. We hope to produce *Zeal of Thy House* in February. You will be interested in the enclosed copy of a letter which I received this week . . . from Pastor Paul Fr. Busk. . . . I have asked him to let me know all about the Copenhagen Religious Drama Society. . . . We have visited various parishes with three one-act plays from G. F. Rubinstein's *Hated Servants*. . . . We have had a request to give them again next month at another church."

Correspondent, Vera Scarborough.

Tavistock. The Deanery Players, whose organizer, Miss L. Scott, is author of a play known to some members, *That Fell Arrest*, performed another three-act play of hers, *Then Will She Return*, in Tavistock Town Hall on October 31st and November 1st.

Correspondent, L. Scott.

NOTES FROM THE LONDON OFFICE

Miss Carina Robins began her work as the Society's Travelling Adviser on September 1st. At the time of going to press she has fulfilled many engagements in the Southern counties and her bookings for the rest of the year are heavy and varied in scope. These include a week-end school organized by the keen Methodist Circuit in Portsmouth, another in Liverpool arranged by the Diocesan Advisory Committee, and a one-day school in Chelmsford under the auspices of the Congregational Union Drama Panel, besides visits to Bradford (for an A.Y.P.A. conference), Lincoln, and a number of places in the Home counties and the London area. Already the value of her services is much appreciated and a fine start has been made in this personal advisory work, and in the pioneering efforts that also fall to the Travelling Adviser's lot. Groups who wish to avail themselves of Miss Robins' expert help during 1947 are advised to stake their claims as soon as possible.

The Society extends a hearty welcome to the large number of new members that have joined since last May. There have been some notable additions to the roll of affiliated National and Regional bodies which include: The G.F.S., the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Congregational Union of England and Wales (with its live Drama Panel directed by the Rev. Jason S. Wright), and the Boy Scouts Association, Portsmouth Diocesan Education Committee (Canon T. Grigg-Smith); Carlisle

Diocesan Adult Religious Education Committee (Canon R. A. Davenport), Liverpool Diocesan Advisory Committee on Religious Drama (Rev. F. Glendenning) and Burton-upon-Trent County Borough Education Committee.

News of progress from Regional and Diocesan Committees will be welcomed by the editor; it is hoped that many more groups in the areas concerned will avail themselves of the advantages of joining the Society through local bodies.

Big developments are coming in Ireland. In both Dublin and Belfast the Church of Ireland has set up R.D. Committees and strenuous planning is going on. In November the Rev. Rex Parkin, as the Society's representative, is visiting both cities to assist them in getting under way.

Contracts with interested persons and organizations overseas show great promise. We welcome the affiliation of the Australian Film Society, and the membership of the Director of the Methodist Youth Dept., New South Wales; inquiries have also been received from Adelaide Diocese and the Australian Board of Missions. New members have joined from South Africa and Trinidad. The New Zealand R.D.S. continues to flourish and we hope to have more news of their activities in our next issue. Holland is turning to the Drama as a means of re-stating the Faith and " Kerk an Wereld ", a church organization with big plans for reconstruction, is looking for good Christian plays and to this end has sought affiliation with us.

" Quiet Week-end ? "

Poole and Parkstone Religious Drama Centre held a Week-end School of Religious Drama from September 20th to 22nd.

This was arranged by the R.D.S. in conjunction with the Centre. The lecturers were Miss Freda Collins, author of *Children in the Market Place*, and Miss Carina Robins, Travelling Adviser to the Society.

A great variety of subjects were dealt with, and by a combination of lectures and practical work, the fifty students taking part were given both a vision of the ideal of the worship of God through Drama, and also practical help in the writing and production of Christian plays.

It was a very happy experience for all concerned ,and we hope that the fruits of this School will be shown in the scope and standard of work done in this area during the coming months.

Addressed to Authors.

A change is being made in the system of dealing with manuscripts submitted to the Society. As from January 1st, 1947, playwrights may :

(*a*) Offer a play to the R.D.S. for publication. They will be read by our reader, but no fee will be charged and no criticism will be forthcoming.

(*b*) Submit a play, under our " Advice to Authors " Service, for careful and constructive criticism by the Society's panel of experts. Fees charged will be 7/6 for a one-act, and 15/- for a longer play.

The Library.

The Society's list of recommended plays has been withdrawn from circulation to enable a thorough and overdue revision to be made; it is intended that a fuller list giving more useful details shall be printed, but as this work will take some time an interim list, based on the old one but brought up to date, is now in preparation and should be available to members in December. This will include particulars of the following noteworthy additions to the library since May.

Newly Published Plays.

Acting Games.	Freda Collins.	U.L.P.
(Including two Religious plays for Children.)		
**Epilogues for Youth Clubs.*	Jessie Powell.	Y.W.C.A.
(Six short plays on Gospel characters and parables.)		
**The Fifth Gospel.*	H. F. Rubenstein.	Gollancz.
**The First-Born.*	Christopher Fry.	C.U.P.
**The First Crib.*	G. Evelyn Hart.	S.P.C.K.
**Glorious Odyssey.*	F. H. Wiseman.	R.D.S./S.P.C.K.
Goodnight Bible Stories.	Freda Collins.	Mowbray.
(Series 1–4) (Stories with acting notes.)		
**Godiva of Coventry.*	J. G. Marash.	Harrap.
**Judgement at Chelmsford.*	Charles Williams.	O.U.P.
**The Just Vengeance.*	Dorothy Sayers.	Gollancz.
(Lichfield Festival Play.)		
" *Miracle* " with " *Magi in Europe* " and " *Poverty* ".	G. R. Myers, B.D.	Epworth Press.
**The Stars Roll By.*	Kenneth M. King.	S.P.C.K./R.D.S.

Reprints and Replacements.

The Boy David.	J. M. Barrie.	Peter Davies.
Chester Mystery Plays.	Arr. John Bridge.	
English Miracle Plays.	A. W. Pollard.	O.U.P.
The Dull Ass's Hoof.	Ronald Duncan.	
(including *Ora Pro Nobis.*)		
**The Foolishness of God.*	Freda Collins.	French.
A King's Daughter.	John Masefield.	Heinemann.
**Murder in the Cathedral.*	T. S. Eliot.	Faber and Faber
Plays of Roswitha.	H. J. W. Tillyard	Faith Press.
Susannah and the Elders.	James Bridie.	Constable.
The Tower to Heaven.	J. Redwood Anderson.	O.U.P.

* Set available for readings, etc.

Books of Reference and General Interest.

The Art of the Play.	Herman Ould.	Pitman.
Designing for the Stage.	Doris Zinkeisen.	Studio Publications.
Frontiers of Drama.	Una Ellis Fermor.	Methuen.
Further Steps in Stagecraft.	Susan Richmond.	Deane.
Home-made Lighting Apparatus.	Angus Wilson.	Deane.
How to Make a Pageant.	Mary Kelly.	Pitman.
Let's Do a Play!	Rodney Bennett.	Nelson.
On English Costume.	Mary Kelly.	Deane.
The Play Produced.	John Fernald.	Deane.
Play Production for Amateurs.	Rodney Bennett.	Curwen.
Practical Playwriting.	J. Falkland Cary.	Simpkin Marshall.
The Production of School Plays.	Amice McDonell.	Allen and Unwin.
Religion and Love in Dante.	Charles Williams.	Dacre Press.
Small Stage Properties and Furniture.	Mrs. Nesfield Cookson.	Allen and Unwin.
Speech Training in the School.	Marjorie Gullan.	Deane.
The Way to Good Speech.	Barbara Storey.	Nelson.

The following plays in typescript have been included in the library :

Fine Linen, a play for Holy Week and Easter. H. M. RICHARDS.

I Will Arise, by T. B. MORRIS (written for, and produced at Coventry, and very suitable for churches needing reconstruction).

Both the above will shortly be published by Muller.

The Prince of Peace, by MAUREEN BLATCHLEY—a moving nativity in a modern Irish setting. Blank verse. One interior scene throughout. Eight men, five women, two or three children.

The Ferryman by CORNELIA HILL. One Act. Allegorical treatment of the St. Christopher legend with real dramatic interest. Should appeal to Youth Groups. Three men, one woman, 1 child.

The Shadow, The Shelter, The Channel is Calm, by H. L. MORTIMER. Three very short one-act plays written during the war. Topical and effective. Small casts.

Before the Flood, by JOHN COPLEY. A modernized Noah play written in light rhyming verse, with comedy and pathos. Recommended to youth groups. One continuous scene.

Enterprising groups are invited to consider these plays for production. They offer considerable scope to imaginative producers and their casts, and the authors will be greatly assisted and encouraged by opportunities of seeing their work in performance.

R.D.S. Plays recently reprinted ;

Beginning of the Way.	HENZIE RAEBURN.
The Flight.	H. M. RICHARDS.

R.D.S. Play now reprinting ;

Go Down Moses.	PHILIP LAMB.

Plays in preparation for publication include ;

Death of a Traitor.	ANTONY MERRYN.	S.P.C.K. for R.D.S.
The House on the Wall.	RICHARD STANCLIFFE.	
Mother of All Living.	VERA ARLETT.	
This Rock.	ALAN POOLE.	
Masque Of the Kings.	JOYCE BIDDELL.	
In Capernaum.	FRANK BUCHANAN.	
The Obedient Rebel.	F. H. WISEMAN.	Independent Press.
Five Christian Plays.	FREDA COLLINS.	S.P.C.K. for R.D.S.
Adventures in Burma.	FREDA COLLINS.	S.P.G.
The Lonely Place. (Three one-act plays.)	VERA ARLETT.	S.P.C.K. for R.D.S.
The Rod and the Staff.	MARC BRANDEL.	S.P.C.K. for R.D.S.

STOP PRESS

Should the Society Change its Name ?

At the General Meeting on November 12th, this question was discussed. A proposal to change " Religious " to " Christian " seemed in advance to have strong support, but discussion revealed cogent arguments on both sides.

For " Christian ": That a Society of Christian people wishing to express their belief and its implications through Drama should state its aim by its name.

Also that " Religious ", especially to young people, was apt to mean sanctimoniousness, or at least, was too vague to kindle enthusiasm; while " Christian " was militant and produced a definite reaction, whether for or against, which was what a live Society should wish.

For retaining " Religious ": first, the conservative view that the Society had a tradition and a certain reputation under this name, and a change would lead to confusion and possible damage; next, the argument for inclusiveness—that the Society had from its foundation desired, and should still attempt, to present not only the dogmatically Christian concept of Religion and of life, but plays leading to or related to it, the loss of which at this searching moment of Religious History would be deplorable; and third, the strictly orthodox argument that the Society would not be able to justify the name " Christian " because many of the plays at present available and inevitably recommended have not moved far enough towards a full statement of the Faith to merit the appellation " Christian ".

The Meeting was not large enough to feel itself competent to decide for the Membership and decided upon a referendum. Two alternative proposals were submitted:—

1. The alteration of name to " Christian ".
2. The other, retaining " Religious ", but inserting " Christian " in the objects of the Society.

Voting papers are sent out with this issue.

Members are asked to pray and to think carefully about this vital matter.

CHRISTIAN DRAMA is the quarterly magazine of the Religious Drama Society; registered offices, S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, London, W.C. 2. A year's subscription might be a good idea for a Christmas Present to a non-member.

Send your order (with Postal Order for 2/4) soon.

THERE'S NOTHING NEW

—as this fourteenth-century Sermon on Miracle Plays shows—

"They sayen (1) that they playen these miracles in the worship of God, and so diden not these Jews that bobbeden Christ. (2) Also oftentimes by such miracle-playing be men converted to good living, as men and women seeing in miracle-playing that the devil by their array (by the which they moven each other to lechery and to pride) maketh them his servants to bring themselves and many others to Hell, and to have far more villainy hereafter by their proud array there than they have worship here. And seeing furthermore that all this worldly being here is but vanity for a while, as is miracle-playing, wherethrough they leaven their pride and taken to them afterwards a meek conversation of Christ and of His saints ; and so miracle-playing turneth men to the belief and not perverteth. (3) Also oftentimes by such miracle-playing men and women seeing the passion of Christ and of His saints be moved to compassion and devotion, weeping bitter tears. Then they be not scorning of God but worshipping.

"(4) Also profitable to men and to the worship of God it is to fulfillen and seeken all the means by the which men may see sin and drawen them to virtues. And sith as there be men that only by earnestful doing willen be converted to God, so there be other men that willen be converted to God but by games and play ; and nowadays men be not converted by the earnest doing of God nor by men nor of men ; then now it is timely and skilful to assayen to converten the people by plays and games, as by miracle-playing and other manner mirths. (5) Also some recreation men must have, and better it is or less evil that they have their recreation by playing of miracles than by playing of other japes. (6) Also since it is lawful to have the miracles of God painted, why is not as well lawful to have the miracles of God played, since men may better readen the will of God and His marvellous works in the playing of them than in the painting ? and better they be holden in men's minds and often rehearsed by the playing of them than by the painting, for this is a dead book, the other a quick."

From a manuscript volume of English Sermons, sometime in the library of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, now in the British Museum. The preacher is arguing against those who defend miracle-plays, and the passage with its counter-arguments appears in G. G. Coulton's "Life in the Middle Ages", vol. I.

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